

Sharp-tailed Grouse Harvest 2002

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Abstract

During the 2002 hunting season for sharp-tailed grouse, three thousand three hundred thirty eight (3,338) hunters applied for 1,050 permits in four different sharp-tailed grouse management units (deer management units) in the northwestern portion of the state. The hunters harvested 45 birds, an increase of 104% from the 2001 harvest.

Methods

A change to the sharp-tailed grouse hunting regulations took effect in 1997 when all hunters were required to apply for a sharp-tailed grouse harvest permit before pursuing grouse. These applications were available at all DNR regional offices and required a three-dollar application fee, except for conservation patron license holders, who had the application included in their license package. Applicants were required to apply for permits based on deer management unit boundaries. Permit levels were set by the DNR, based on sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground surveys in the spring of 2002. All permits were mailed to hunters prior to the start of the hunting season. After harvesting a sharp-tailed grouse, the hunter was required to record the date of kill and the deer management unit of kill on the registration stub, and mail it back to the DNR in Madison. All stubs were then entered into the DNRVAX computer and analyzed using SAS.

Results

Three thousand three hundred thirty eight (3,338) hunters applied for sharp-tailed harvest permits in four deer management units across the northwestern part of the state. Deer management units that were open to hunting are shown in Figure 1. One thousand and fifty (1,050) permits were issued in 2002, a 67% increase from 2001. Two thousand two hundred eighty eight hunters (2,288) did not receive a permit because they applied for a unit that was not open to hunting or because they requested a unit that was oversubscribed. Harvest permit distribution is shown in Table 1.

The 2002 sharp-tailed grouse season was held from 19 October through 10 November, 2002. Reported harvest as recorded on returned hunter registration stubs was 45 birds. This was more than double the last sharp-tailed grouse harvest of 22 birds in 2001 (Figure 2). No estimate of hunter compliance was attempted. Therefore, actual harvest of sharp-tailed grouse was probably higher. The deer management unit with the highest sharp-tailed grouse harvest was 10, with 15 birds taken (Table 1). Permit success was highest in unit 8 at 8.3%. Success rates are not corrected for non-hunters.

The increased harvest numbers are likely the result of three factors: an additional hunting unit, additional hunting permits, and an increase in sharp-tailed grouse population numbers. The dancing ground surveys done in the spring of 2002 indicated a 13% increase in population size from 2001. With increased hunting area, additional hunters, and a higher population of grouse, the scattered sharp-tailed grouse populations are easier for hunters to find.

Most of the harvest occurred during opening weekend. Harvest on weekends surpassed weekday harvest. A full account of date of harvest can be found in Table 2.

Table 1. *Sharp-tailed grouse permit distribution, harvest and permit success, 2002.*

Unit	Permits Issued	Harvest	% Success
2	540	14	2.6%
8	60	5	8.3%
9	250	11	4.4%
10	200	15	7.5%

Table 2. *Sharp-tailed grouse harvest by date, 2002 (Bolded dates indicate weekends).*

Date of Kill	Number
10/19/2002	9
10/20/2002	8
10/21/2002	0
10/22/2002	2
10/23/2002	1
10/24/2002	1
10/25/2002	0
10/26/2002	1
10/27/2002	4
10/28/2002	3
10/29/2002	2
10/30/2002	0
10/31/2002	0
11/01/2002	0
11/02/2002	1
11/03/2002	3
11/04/2002	1
11/05/2002	1
11/06/2002	1
11/07/2002	0
11/08/2002	1
11/09/2002	4
11/10/2002	2

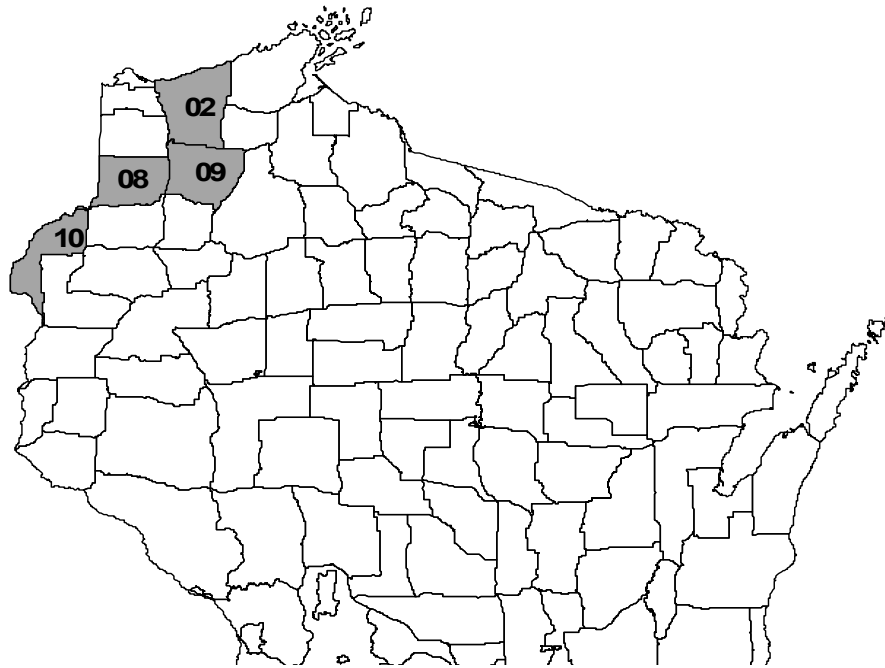


Figure 1. Shaded deer management units were open to sharptail hunting in 2002.

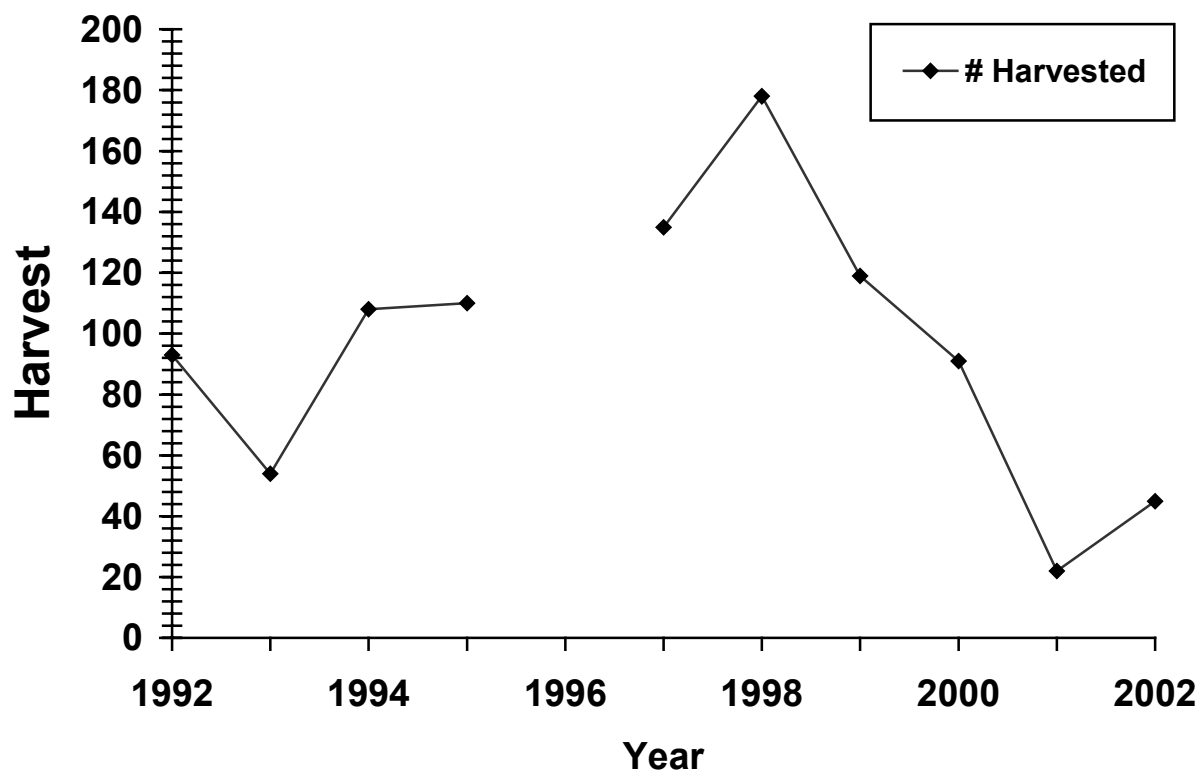


Figure 2. Sharp-tailed grouse harvest, 1992-2002.